Hall of Society of Inquiry
Theological Seminary, Columbia, April 1st 1

Society of Inquiry
Princeton, Theological Seminary.

Dear Brethren.

In conformity with your request we hasten to reply to your interesting communication of 20th ultimo, in order that this may reach you before the first of May. We are no less surprised than grieved to learn that you received no answer to your last epistle to us. We find upon our book the record of a letter written to you in February of last year, since which time we heard nothing from you until the reception of the communication now before us. We deeply regret an occurrence which seems to indicate a want of interest on our part in a correspondence which we really regard as highly important, and which we know is exceedingly interesting to us. Though our zeal in the service of our common Master possesses but little of the fervency which it ought, yet we trust we shall ever feel it our duty and privilege to contribute our part to maintain & cultivate such an intercourse, as our mutual relation as identified in the same glorious enterprise would suggest to be conducive to our mutual edification. We rejoice to feel that the bond of union which connects the disciples of Jesus is too strong to be set at naught by the influences which arise from their residence in different sections of the world, and from their association with opposing prejudices. While these influences are exerting a powerful agency in producing dissension, and consequent alienation, we feel assured that so long as we are animated by the Spirit of Christ these will never be able to disturb our harmony of feeling, or interrupt our present agreeable interchange of sentiments. If any man is capable of breathing a truly Catholic Spirit, that man is the Christian who has been taught to regard with the same eye all the nations & kindreds of the earth. It is this same Spirit under a somewhat different aspect which causes the true Minister of Christ to close his eyes to

the lines of distinction which split into its thousand parts the great family of man, and with one expansive view to contemplate all as his own brethren, and as having equal claims upon his affections and charities. And yet this is a spirit which is seldom possessed in its full proportions by many who we have reason to believe have been called to the sacred office. National, sectional, domestic & personal considerations exert a powerful influence to warp the judgments of duty, and to give a disproportionate bias to the claims which exhibit themselves to the view. Thus to yield the sense of obligation to the impulses of feeling is at once an illustration of the weakness and of the strength of nature — We most cordially respond to the sentiments we express as to the extent of the field we are required to contemplate; and we are endeavouring to have our hearts fully imbued with this expansive spirit, in order that we may be ready to go wherever our Master shall send us. The subject of Foreign Missions is not forgotten by us, though we confess our interest is far below the standard we sought to attain. Several of our number have fixed their eyes upon Pagan lands, and it is highly probable that one of them will embark during the coming Summer for Northern India. We are endeavouring to increase and deepen our interest in this cause. We keep up a correspondence with four Missionaries, viz Messrs Mc Bride, Dibble, Merrick and Wilson, which we find highly conducive to the cultivation of a special and direct interest in behalf of the heathen world generally, as well as of those parts which are occupied by these laborers. A letter received to day from Brother Mc Bride, who is a graduate of this Seminary, contains a very urgent and pungent appeal in behalf of the newly opened field of China. A recent visit from Dr Scudder, and his interesting details of the disgusting features of Indian idolatry, have in some degree increased our compassion for their pitiable condition, and inflamed our zeal to vindicate the honor and authority of the one Supreme and holy God — We regret that we are compelled to state that the interest in the subject of Foreign Missions among our Southern Churches is exceedingly limited and feeble. Many of them never contribute a single cent, and year after year rolls by, heaping it's myriads of immortal souls to perdition - and still

they move not. May God send his Spirit into our midst, and arouse a slumbering Church. Whoever considers this fact in connexion with its invariable attendants, must be fully convinced that the Spirit of Missions is essentially the Spirit of genuine piety. The comparative condition of the different portions of the Church, we regard as clearly attesting that the degree of interest which is manifested in this great subject is a sure index of the state of religion. — Large portions of our Southern territory are still destitute of the means of grace, and at every meeting of our ecclesiastical judicatories we are compelled to hear the most earnest petitions from many parts of the country, for a preached gospel — and it is with the greatest pain we have to state, that these petitions are mostly unavailing in consequence of the great paucity of laborers. Under these circumstances it is difficult to keep alive any very elevated hopes as to the spiritual prospects of our Southern Zion. So closely connected are all the interests and enterprises of the Church, that when one languishes, all are unfavorably affected. With a small band of ministers, and a scattered population, it is no easy task to bring to bear upon the minds of the people, the claims which God has upon them.

In reply to your question as to our personal labors in the destitute communities immediately around us, three are several of our number engaged in this work, though as yet with only comparative success. In this manner we can cultivate the Spirit of the Ministry, and in degree of experimental knowledge of the nature of our future work, shall be induced to persevere even in difficulty and discouragement. As to labors among our slave population we have nothing of special interest to communicate. Negroes living in the vicinity of a town are usually less accessible than those collected on the large plantations at a distance. In the city, however, there are considerable numbers who attend on the stated means of grace, and many are in the communion of the Church. The Pastor of our Church in this place lectures weekly to a crowded audience of this class. We trust that the Southern Church, generally is preparing to do more than they have ever done for this large portion of our population.

With you, we confess that we need much of the Spirit of prayer and self consecration to God, in the Seminary, and we earnestly solicit an

interest in your petitions at a throne of grace.

With highest assurances of
our continued interest in your spiritual welfare, and of our sincere
desire for your complete preparation for our common and glorious
work We remain dear brethren your affectionate & humble
fellow laborers

For the Soc of Inquiry, Charles. A. Stillman
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N. J.